

Camden Opera House Committee
January 11, 2011
Katherine Aldridge Tucker Room

Attending: Don White, Kerry Hadley, Dave Morrison, Bob Williams, Susan Dorr, Kate Bates, Deb Dodge, Hal Owen

Meeting was called to order at 5:17 by Don White.

Minutes from the December meeting were accepted unanimously.

Report from Dave on Washington Street lighting: the Historic Resources Committee approved the re-use of the existing locations with new fixtures and brighter bulbs to provide much needed improved lighting on that side of the building. Dave felt that it would be the most cost effective approach and Deb thought that if the expenditure was under \$500 it would not require Select Board approval (Dave was charged to proceed, first to check costs and the threshold for approval, then to implement the plan!)

Dave reported that the Washington Street door that leads to the Opera House office and the back hallway into the town offices would be re-keyed, an occasional (every few years) event to maintain security - anyone who has old keys to that door should turn them in and be issued new keys as appropriate.

Kerry led us in a discussion of the budget projections and goals for the upcoming fiscal year for the Auditorium part of the COH. Town Manager, Roberta Smith has requested that all department budgets be submitted to her by January 26. In the overview, the growth of the COH has been impressive year after year with the current calendar of 120 events scheduled and an additional 100 plus internal nonpaid meetings. (not 50 school events) Annual revenues have regularly exceeded the number projected in the Town Manager's budget column. The goal of the Opera House budget is to continue to increase the revenue and decrease the subsidy from the town, but staffing needs to increase proportionately, also. 90% of events booked in the COH are with non-profits who receive greatly reduced booking fees, 40 - 50%. The upgrades to the COH, the 'Lovely Old Maiden' at the heart of our downtown, has involved lots of safety upgrades as well as equipment purchases and acquisitions (CCT lights, risers, cyclorama, shell) which have incentivized groups to utilize the COH and provided rental income from their use.

An itemized set of notes regarding the proposed budget is attached hereto. ? (should I attach the draft budget? And maintenance or capital plans?)

Next steps in the COH development hinge on establishing the Manager's position as a full time employee with benefits. Kerry has consistently put in enough hours to qualify her as a full time employee but has yet to receive approval for that upgrade. The committee discussion centered on the growth that has taken place due to the concerted effort of Kerry and Dave courting new renters and providing excellent service to them so they come back. Dave puts in 5-8 hours per week maintaining the lights and the rental income generated offsets that expense. The committee feels that the growth in the COH revenue justifies the additional costs to the town to cover benefits.

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A motion was made by Susan to approve the COH budget as proposed by Kerry, seconded by Bob. In discussion the motion was amended to include a recommendation that a review of the auditorium rental rates be undertaken with the intention of increases to offset a portion of the increase in the proposed budget. Motion made by Kate, seconded by Bob, passed unanimously. The committee resolved to review rental rates at the February meeting.

Dave reported that Bay Chamber wants to rent our projector for an upcoming program at the Strom in February. We have also had requests from Everyman Repertory theatre for our risers; the Community School requested a loan of third floor tables for their event at the Rockport Opera House. Dave is checking with Maine Municipal Association to see if our property is covered by insurance if we loan/rent it out. The committee discussed the various rental requests and concluded that it is better policy not to rent our equipment out to any groups for use outside the COH building. Being consistent will be easier than trying to consider each request individually. We will work on putting a policy into writing.

Business After Hours: March 9th

Natalie's is providing food. Still waiting to hear back from Raymond Brunyanski re: Cellardoor Winery co-sponsoring and providing wine but will approach another local winery if Cellardoor cannot participate. Dave will be working on a slide show that will run in the auditorium, the Tucker Room will be set up for food and the 3rd floor will be included in tours. Kerry indicated that new wallpaper will be installed before the Business After Hours event. Swatches of color and designs were viewed and a pattern has been chosen.

Movies:

Susan reported having been in touch with Northeast Historic Film about some interesting short films of the midcoast area and their ability to transfer them and provide them for our use for \$150. She had also met with representatives of the Camden Rockport Historical Society who are very interested in collaborating on a program. It was tentatively set for Sunday, March 13. Susan will continue to work on this, firming up the films and working with the CRHS to line up some local people who will be interesting speakers. We discussed selling refreshments and taking a free will donation to offset our costs. Susan will check with CRHS to see what hard costs they will incur to put on an event in order to be fair about income that is generated.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM

Next meeting, Monday, February 7 5 PM

Respectfully submitted, Susan Dorr